

Off-highway Vehicle Ministerial Advisory Committee

March 31, 2009

Meeting Notes

Attendees:

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| Laurie Cranton | Carment d'Intino | Lloyd Wallis |
| Ken Reade | George Pugsley | Jim Vance |
| Corey Robar (phone) | Raymond Plourde | Hugh Gillis (ex-officio) |
| Sarah MacKay (ex-officio) | Derick Stoddard (ex-officio) | |

Regrets:

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| Judith Cabrita | Laura Barkhouse | Charles Atkinson |
| Paul d'Eon | Roger King | Glenn Joudrey |
| Patricia MacNeil | Floyd Cock | Peter Labour |
| Pat Hicks | | |

1. Welcome, Updates (Laurie Cranton)

(Note that there was not a quorum present at this time; therefore, the meeting was not called to order and the following is discussion only.)

Meeting with Minister: Laurie will be meeting with Minister Bolivar-Getson tomorrow, along with Laura Barkhouse, Hugh Gillis, and Patricia MacNeil. Laurie indicated that DNR is optimistic that there will be a replacement for Jennifer Annett's position in the near future.

Buy Back Nova Scotia: Laurie attended the Buy Back Nova Scotia Rally in Yarmouth. Laurie also sent a letter in support of government purchase of the land.

Bridges: Laurie shared a letter from the Southwest Nova ATV Association regarding the bridges. It was noted that the bridges are important in the region with respect to the continuity of the trail, however, there is a high cost associated with repairing them (~\$30 million). There has been no official decision by government at this point. This is an example of a larger issue, i.e. there are several bridges throughout the province in stages of disrepair. This should be dealt with as a systematic issue rather than on a case-by-case basis.

Action: Laurie will discuss this in his meeting with the Minister, and it will be on the agenda for the next OHVMAC meeting.

(At this point, a quorum was established and the meeting officially called to order.)

TIR OHV Policy: Greg Newell presented a preliminary draft of an OHV Policy prepared by the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, which deals particularly with trail crossings on different classes of highways. Greg noted that the policy must work within the confines of existing legislation. Once TIR has reviewed the document further, it will be brought to the OHVMAC for feedback.

2. **Reports** (Various)

No reports from the Trails Subcommittee or Education Subcommittee as Laura Barkhouse and Paul d'Eon were not present.

Enforcement (Ken Reade): The committee met and is up-to-date on all issues that have been brought to their attention. The issue of trail cameras was briefly discussed.

DNR Enforcement (Derick Stoddard): Derick attended a meeting of the NS Federation of Wildlife Anglers and Hunters, where a resolution was brought forward seeking access to SANS trails. Derick noted that trappers have access to the trails because it is a source of income. The Federation does not have representation on the OHVMAC, so it was suggested that they be invited to a meeting in order to present their issues.

Action: Laurie will contact the NS Federation of Wildlife Anglers and Hunters and invite them to an upcoming meeting

DNR (Hugh Gillis): Hugh reported the recent deposits into the OHV Infrastructure Fund and indicated that a full report would be provided at the April meeting. (The issues of Jennifer Annet's replacement and the bridges were previously discussed).

Trails: Hugh met with Laura Barkhouse and Stan Slack regarding trail funding and timelines. Laurie indicated that there were more than 55 applications received for trail funding. The Trails Subcommittee will be meeting on April 20 to discuss these applications and hope to report on their recommendations at the next meeting.

There was discussion regarding the signs in Paradise. Hugh noted that SANS has a license for that portion of the rail corridor and will be erecting the signs. Hugh requested to be informed when the signs are in place. It is imperative that these signs be put up as soon as possible so that speed and time of day restrictions can be enforced. Laurie will discuss this in his meeting with the Minister.

3. **Capital Equipment Fund** (Laurie Cranton)

The MAC had advised Minister Morse in the past that they would be looking into establishing a capital equipment fund. The Trails Subcommittee still needs to consider what equipment would fall under this fund, cost sharing, eligibility, application process, etc. Laurie and Laura had considered that \$200,000 could be used to establish the fund

this year; however, committee members had concerns regarding who would take responsibility to maintain the equipment, both now and in the future. There were also concerns with respect to whether this was the best use for this money, and whether the fund would be abused.

Action: Laurie will advise the Trails Subcommittee to come back with more details regarding such things as criteria, parameters, logistics, etc. and noted that the fund would not likely be established this year.

4. Committee Representation and Renewal (Laurie Cranton)

Minister Morse had extended the term of everyone on the MAC until the end of March 2009. Laurie ascertained that all committee members wished to continue in their positions, and will be asking Minister Bolivar-Getson to formalize this for two more years.

There have been names recently put forth for the vacant municipal positions. In addition, the medical position is still vacant and should be filled.

The issue of stakeholder balance was raised and it was suggested that the committee identify stakeholders that are not currently represented. The following were suggested for representation: active transportation, agricultural community, field naturalists/bird watchers. Some points to consider are: the MAC is weighted heavily in favour of OHV-riders, the desirability of having committee members that are open-minded, and at what point do you draw the line?

Action: Laurie will discuss this in his meeting with the Minister.

5. OHV Conference Agenda (Laurie Cranton)

The theme of this year's conference is "Safety and Education". The agenda is close to being finalized. The morning will be the same as last year, while the afternoon will be devoted to the environment. Some ideas are to speak to Peter Labor about presenting on protected areas, and to the Ecology Action Centre about presenting on working with groups to minimize damage. The conference committee is meeting tomorrow afternoon.

Raymond suggested that the discussion of protected areas be expanded to include sensitive/vulnerable ecosystems, and indicated that the EAC would coordinate with Peter Labor. He also suggested that this presentation would benefit from an enforcement presence.

\$10,00 is budgeted for the conference. If the MAC is satisfied that this falls under the category of "Special Projects", then approval is not required for each individual expenditure. There will be a charge of \$30/person (up from \$20 last year). Last year,

240 people attended. They have budgeted for 200 this year, but have room for 300. The brochure will be ready by mid-april.

6. Strategic Plan Draft Review and Recommendation (Jim Vance)

Jim circulated that draft document by email in advance of the meeting, and hard copies were available. This document incorporated the feedback that resulted from the review at the February meeting. Some changes were made, and the document was approved with the caveat that the changes would be considered if an absent committee member had a significant issue.

7. Sport and RV Show Review (Laura Barkhouse and Laurie Cranton)

This agenda item was deferred because of Laura's absence.

8. Other Business

Brushy Hill: A letter of recommendation was written, but no response has been received from Minister Bolivar-Getson. Raymond indicated that he had been informed that DNR was proceeding with the new trail through Crown land with high conservation value. It is one of the few tracts of land in that landscape that could be protected, and is located in Central Region. Raymond requested immediate intervention of the OHVMAC.

A possible alternative would be to develop an OHV trail on private land. All alternatives need to be explored. Raymond made a motion that if a trail is constructed, no money from the OHV Infrastructure Fund go towards it, either for development or future maintenance because it defies the principles of the OHVMAC, namely, that riding areas should avoid high conservation lands and sensitive ecosystems. There were concerns that a decision like this would unfairly penalize clubs because of a decision that DNR makes.

Action: Laurie will write a letter to Minister Bolivar-Getson (and copied to staff, if appropriate). The letter will request immediate intervention and investigation of all other opportunities, reiterate that this should not happen in the future, and that future trails on Crown land should be vetted by the MAC. A decision regarding funds from the Infrastructure Fund was not made, pending the outcome of this letter.

In addition, Raymond agreed to make a presentation to the MAC regarding the Colin Stewart Forest Forum.

MEETING ADJOURNED

NEXT MEETING: APRIL 28, 2009